

ISSUE NO. 3  
EASTER 2025

# ST. HELENS HERITAGE



# GLASS EYE

- PUBLIC ART**
- THE ART OF DARTS**
- WHAT HERITAGE MEANS TO ME**
- REMEMBERING GNARL**

**FREE**

**Creative Underground**  
Exploring the Heritage of our Arts and Culture

**RE-DOCK**

**Heritage Fund**

Cover Image : Shaun Lowndes

# NOTICE-BING

Have you noticed this big bird or this person round town?





**ANOTHER COUNTRY**  
watch the film here




**GARETH JACKSON**  
download his book  
Nearby




**SHAUN LOWNDES**  
website




**ELEGANCE  
CHARM AND  
DEADLY DANGER**



listen to the album here

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### What's Happening?

A periodical publication, - otherwise know as a 'zine, this culturezine, this "Glass Eye" Issue 3, which you're holding in your hand - can't always be up to date, but we do our best. In this Issue we have some responses to a few current developments, and of course will be interested to get your comments on our coverage.

First of all we welcome Rachel Hart to St Helens as the town's new Heritage Officer and we were keen to hear how she views this heritage thing which is the main pre-occupation of "Glass Eye". It turns out that she's as keen on "living memory" as we are. If one of the big sports stories of the winter was Luke Littler and his darts successes then we wanted to reflect this in a town which has a long and often illustrious association with darts and it turns out that Rachel's brother Sam is a big fan so we asked him to ruminate on what it is that makes darts more than just another competitive sport.

And while we're on about current developments the St Helens district of Blackbrook recently elected a councillor representing the Reform Party. We wondered what was going on in Blackbrook so we asked a local to give us a perspective on the area.

"Glass Eye" isn't just interested in the past and present but also the future and we noted that plans are underway for a major celebration of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 2030. The line, of

course runs through St Helens, and the Rainhill Trials - winning engine, famously, the "Rocket" - were held in 1829. So will Rainhill get a look-in on the celebrations? We invited a local writer to imagine what might happen.

It's also good to introduce to "Glass Eye" readers to Claire Rigby, although most locals know of MoMo's and many will have enjoyed one of Claire's lively local history lectures. For Issue 3 Claire has provided us with a striking image from her "Entire History" collection.

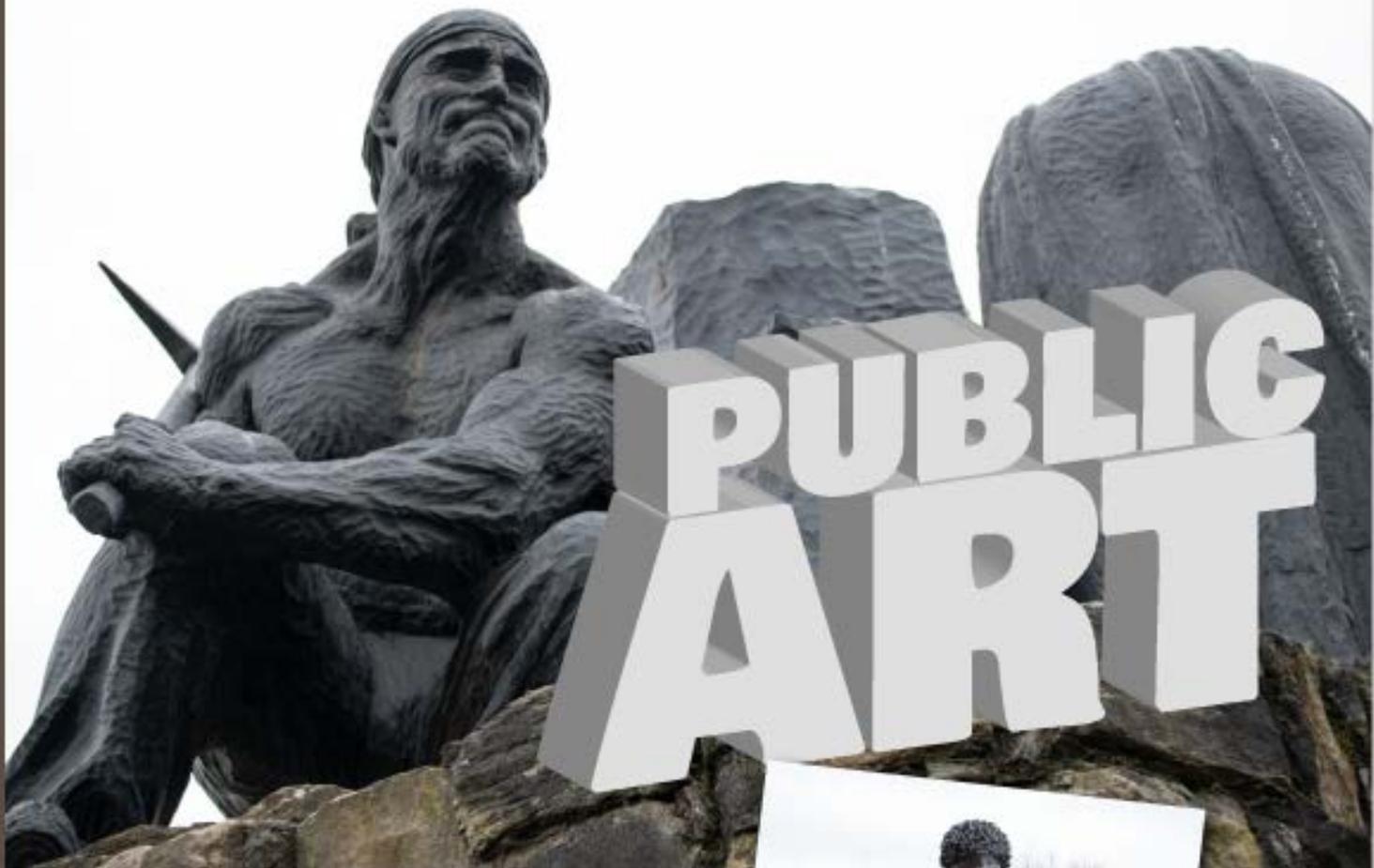
And, saving the best for first, we have a photo-essay of local public art, brought together by Kieran de More with a request for YOU to get your phones and cameras busy on some of the art we have yet to trace down.

And we celebrate the intense expressions of the brief but utterly memorable Gnar!, the atmospheric writing of novelist Gareth Jackson and the parallel universe of the legendary Kwentin - thanks to each and all for their contributions.

It's all one big family out there. We welcome all comment so send us your reactions and contributions to

[glasseyemag@gmail.com](mailto:glasseyemag@gmail.com)

Responses so far have been very positive, and copies of Issue 2 disappeared pretty quickly so grab a couple of copies if you know somebody who might miss out.



They call it public art.....

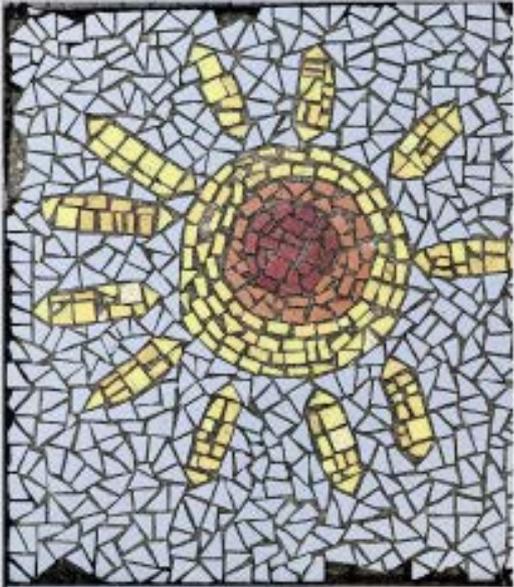
...all those sculptures and monuments and murals and mosaics and installations. There's quite a few across St Helens Borough and we're dedicated to bringing them, good or bad, to your attention. There is always The Dream but we'll devote a special feature to that.

Meanwhile Kieran de More has been taking photographs and invites you to pass comment on this selection of art-works.

And, as you will see, we are inviting you to send in your photographs of the ones we have missed. We begin with the sculpture we teased you with in Issue 2....

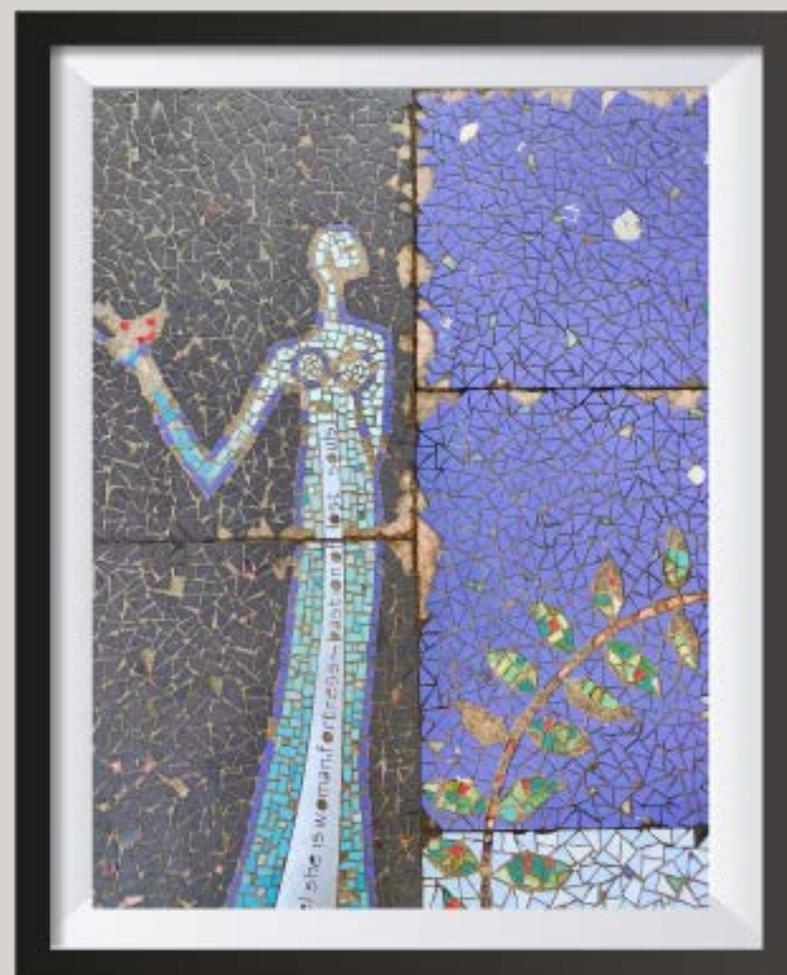
That was the Worker's Memorial in Vera Page Park, Salisbury Street, WA10 1FY





rising to her new dawn . . .





## AN INCOMPLETE LIST OF PUBLIC ART IN ST HELENS

- Earlestown Obelisk
- Huskisson Memorial
- South African War Memorial
- Queen Victoria Statue
- Rainhill Obelisk
- West Derby War Memorial
- Cenotaph
- The Miner, also known as the Anderton Mining Monument (featured here)
- Miner's Head
- The Landings Statue (featured here)
- Sustrans Portrait Bench (Johnny Vegas, Steve Prescott, glass blower)
- Dream (to be featured)
- Lyme and Wood Pit Mining Memorial
- Kieran Cunningham bronze statue
- Metalworks – St Helens Heritage trail
- Metalworks – Sutton Manor site
- Mosaics and metalworks – Rainford Linear Park
- Stuttgart Garden (wooden horse, vines and a glass monolith) World of Glass
- Your Name Here
- St Helens Through the Lens
- Norman Harvey VC Statue
- Workers Memorial (featured here)
- Follow The Light / Keep Growing
- Keep Going murals
- Together in Love and Courage
- Strong Women of St Helens Mural
- The Millenium Needle
- Captain WKFC Warneford and Crew Fountain
- Metalworks - George Street
- Metalworks – Newton Heritage Trail
- Mosaics and metalworks – Parr Millenium Green
- Mosaics and metalworks – Sutton Manor Park
- Obelisk – Rainford Village Hall
- St. Thomas Sq Gateway Structure (town entrance sign)
- Sculptures in Griffin Wood
- Saints Knowsley Road - blue plaque and large carved stone mount
- Wooden Statues in The Duckeries



Also shown

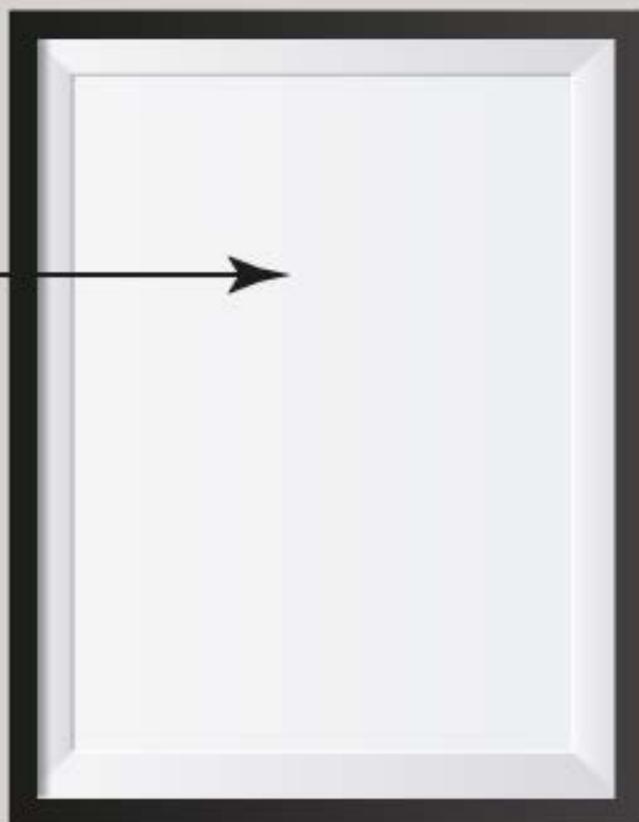
- The K's mural (Citadel)
- stainless Steel Artworks by Bernadette Hughes – Town Centre

## Your picture here

send pictures of the public art you've seen to us at

**[glasseyemag@gmail.com](mailto:glasseyemag@gmail.com)**

in JPEG, TIFF or RAW  
together with a note as to what and where it is.  
Why not try for an unusual angle for your picture?



# WHAT IS IT ABOUT... BLACKBROOK?

The St Helens District of Blackbrook recently came to public attention when it elected its first Reform councillor. A recent count suggested that there are 87 Reform councillors in Britain, most of them in the Eastern part of England, so what's going on in St Helens? And what is it about Blackbrook? We asked a local for their perspective. When people in St Helens think of Blackbrook what do they think of?

"If somebody says the word Blackbrook to me I immediately think of the Blackbrook Rugby Club. The area's named after the Brook, sometimes known as 'Stinky Brook', in the hotter months at least. You've got the traditional estates, you've got Laffak and Chain Lane. - It was the area which ferried coal down from the colliery. Now because of the decline of industry and the jobs associated with that it's seen as an economically vulnerable area. There's small local industry - there were some big employers back in the day but now it's been left to its own

devices. Even the small enterprises seem to close down every two years or so and something else pops up, but it doesn't last very long, so it does give that impression of an area that's struggling a little bit. Historically it's a staunch working-class area, a lot of people would have been labourers, with physical jobs, - I think the character of the area is defined by its working class roots. I would liken it to a plucky underdog.

What do Blackbrook people do for fun? Well, all the recreation facilities have gone so I'd say, Netflix, a couple

of pints in the odd pub they can find, and maybe watching the rugby?

I wouldn't say the area looks run-down - you have got this mix of Council homes and private homes together - but it's not unique to St Helens in looking 'tired'. It doesn't look desolate, but it does need somebody to come along with a fresh lick of paint.

The native Blackbrooker would look around and think, the country at large is saying, we don't care about you - and there is a mix of apathy and anger. But a siege mentality does bring a sense of community, especially in these older townships of the proto-St Helens. You see that in the social clubs. It is a bit of an us-versus-them mentality.

## It does give that impression of an area that's struggling a little bit.

The people in the area have seen themselves losing their jobs, and their town, and probably what they see as their identity, over the last 60 years maybe. Whether it's been a red government or a blue government nothing seems to change, it's been continual decline.

Overall I'd say that Blackbrook hasn't been well-served by its Council, but there will always be people who find fault with any new initiative, a strong negative vocal reaction, which may have led to the Council employing a cautious, risk-averse, safety strategy. At the same time, there have been cuts from Westminster and I don't think it's all the



Council's fault.

There is a trend to Reform nationally but, remember, St Helens has only ever returned a Labour Council since its inception. The last 14 years have been horrendous - the Conservative Party didn't do anything to assist St Helens as a staunch Labour stronghold, - but the Council have always been in charge so they have to face the flak about decreasing living standards. So people start looking for alternatives, looking for blame. Reform don't seem to offer any answers but they offer some blame. They seem to offer change, rather than no-change or just going downwards.

Immigration is of interest to people in Blackbrook. It's all about percep-

tion and the actual evidence doesn't appeal to people. The story from all the media is

that immigration is a bad thing, that it depresses wages and brings undesirables.

The truth of the matter is that if you're seeking asylum you're not entitled to benefit, and if you come over you contribute more net than the average native citizen. That's not a popular thing for people to hang their hats on. When things are going badly it's hard to look inwardly and blame yourself - it's much easier to blame other people. It's partly a tribal feeling of belonging which over-rides rational sense. The information about immigration doesn't align with the perception. And the perception doesn't include the massive inequality between the very rich and the very poor. Unless that inequality is addressed, - the billionaires and trillionaires and their assets, - unless we see a radical approach from a strong government, unless living standards are seen to improve, it all leads to a lack of hope and that leads to dissatisfaction. They throw around figures of GDP in the billions and that doesn't

the Council have always been in charge so they have to face the flak about decreasing living standards.

It's partly a tribal feeling of belonging which over-rides rational sense.



mean anything to the people of Blackbrook. The average person in Blackbrook isn't feeling the effects of change, projects that come to fruition in the town\*.

\* "In December 2024 REFORM candidate Victor Floyd won the Blackbrook by-election seizing the seat from Labour.

The by-election was being held on Thursday following the passing of Labour representative Linda Maloney, who died aged 71 after a short illness, earlier in the autumn.

In a narrow contest, Mr Floyd (546 votes) edged Labour candidate Sally Yeoman (460 votes)."



# GNARL



Images : Kwentin



# GNARL

# GNARL





**WATCHED IN AWE AT MUSICAL MACHINE**

*By [Name]*

It was a night of pure musical magic. The band, known for their raw energy and innovative sound, delivered a performance that left the audience in awe. From the opening notes of their first song, the energy was palpable. The lead guitarist, Sean Reynard, was particularly impressive, weaving intricate melodic lines through a sea of distortion. The bassist, Anthony (Dov) Donovan, provided a solid, driving foundation, while the drummer, Jack Derby, kept the tempo perfectly in check. The frontman, Rob Gillon, delivered lyrics with a mix of sarcasm and sincerity that resonated with the crowd. By the end of the set, the audience was on their feet, cheering and singing along. It was a truly memorable night, and one that will be remembered for years to come.

*Reviewed by [Name]*

The band's sound is a unique blend of punk, post-punk, and experimental rock. Their music is both accessible and challenging, with a strong emphasis on live performance. The album they released last year was a critical success, earning them a reputation as one of the most exciting new acts in the scene. Their live shows are a testament to their commitment to their craft, and it's clear that they have a bright future ahead of them.

*Reviewed by [Name]*

The band's music is a perfect example of what punk rock can be. It's raw, it's honest, and it's full of energy. Their live shows are a true spectacle, and it's clear that they are a band that will continue to inspire and entertain for many years to come.

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**GNA RL THE CITADEL**

SAT OCTOBER 20  
EIGHT O'CLOCK

Rob 'Boop' Green says - "Thank god they're back!"

**Gnarl Remembering...Gnarl**

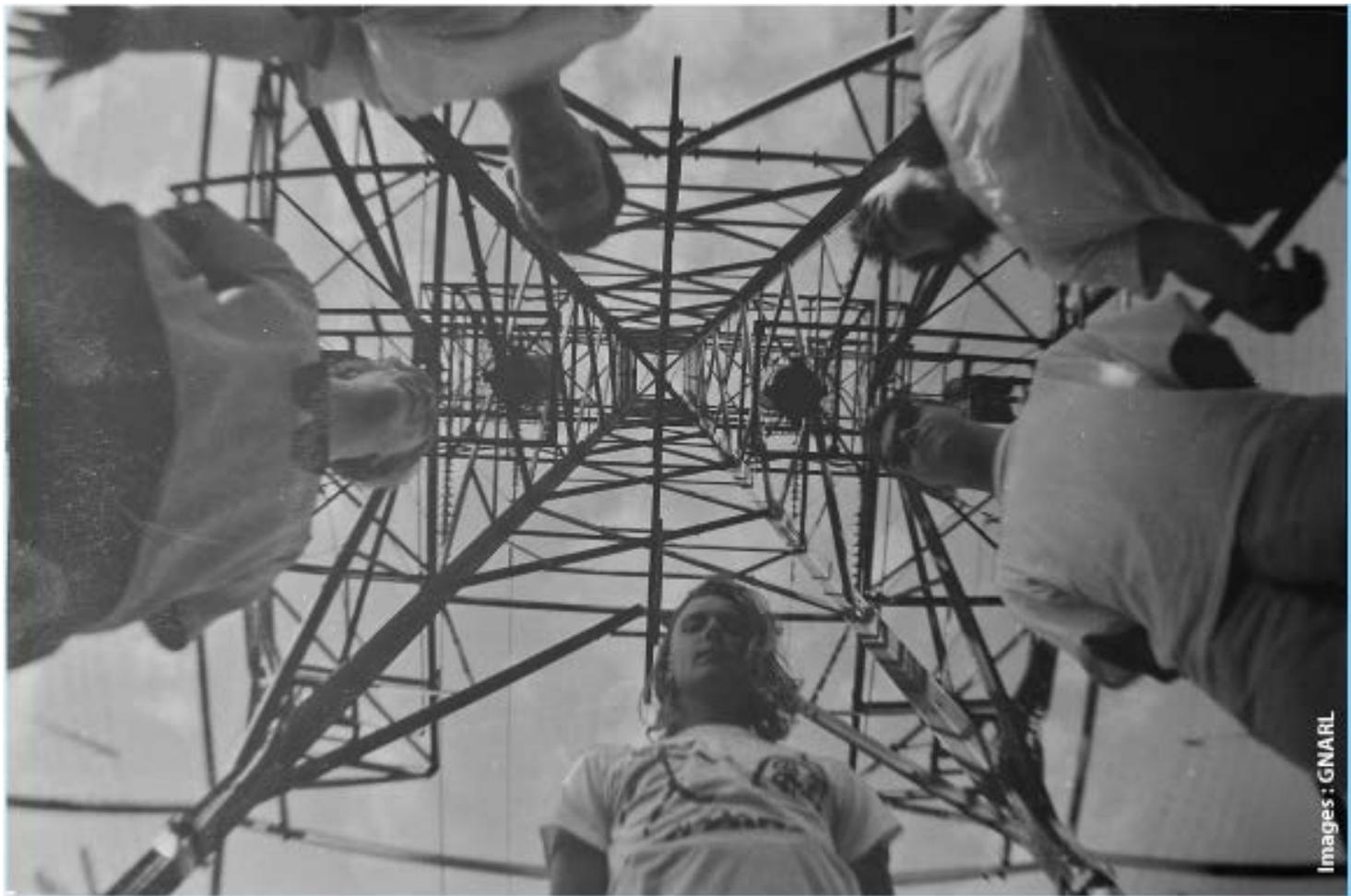
**Gnarl came** from improvisation and meagre material means, emerging first as, what Roger Hill once called, aural granola - a visceral, perversely atonal **force of nature** - becoming, by its end, a mere 18 months later, a complex, creatively uneasy chimera consisting of the, by then, wildly diverging and competing styles and directions of its members. It **pulled together by pulling apart**, and what was made there was all its own. Every band draws a ring around itself, becoming **a cult of a kind**, with its own language and mores. Gnarl's always 8 hour-long rehearsals were as much about surviving the scathing St. Helens sarcasm we meted out mercilessly upon one another as they were about teasing out songs from those slabs of improv. The music came from both. It felt light-hearted and deadly-serious at the same time. We developed a distinct system, and we took its focus and intensity to the stage, right up to and including that final gig at St. Helens show in 1991 ... as ever, Jace Glover, front and centre, delivering lyrics never heard before; Dave Cunliffe,

From up there, on the stage, it felt like we were one ferocious driven thing. Dave emphasises vitality and a personal feeling of euphoria. Similarly, for Rob, there was an 'intense joy and liberation', and, it seems, discovery, too, as he goes on to say that there he found 'this experience called 'music' could happen', adding that 'there wasn't a gig I didn't relish and **delight in**'. Jace shares a specific memory in that respect - Gnarl supporting Poisoned Electric Head, at the Flying Picket, Liverpool, October 1989 - recalling the 'exhilaration of watching all the Leccy 'Ead fans as they begin to listen and appreciate. I was happy with my words and loved belting them out at a sometime bewildered-looking crowd. On stage alongside **some of St Helens' most talented musicians**, I finally relaxed. We were good and I realised it. I was continually beset by stage fright but on this night, I joined with the **music, tingling all over** and rolling each delicious word around my tongue. Wild, screaming bass, exquisite drumming and everyone in the room who are there for the main act, sitting up and taking notice'. Gnarl's perfor-



**insanely** deft and energetic on the drums; Jack Derby's artful and gigantic DX7; the inventive guitaristic non-identical twin basses of Sean Reynard and Anthony (Dov) Donovan ... and before **we stole** Sean from The Kratchit Family, the sonorous originality of Rob Gillon on guitar.

mance there attracted a rave **review** in Sounds. For Sean, Gnarl was majestic, ethereal, layered. He 'enjoyed playing within a brutal landscape of **jagged repugnance** yet basking in its grandiose majesty', confesses that he preferred Gnarl before he joined! Jack notes 'surprise that some found Gnarl's music angry



Images : GNARL

or scary', going on to say that it was 'never like that for me, always about energy, **intent and cathartic** release. As trite as it may sound, the 21 year old person that I was then really did want us to sound like a symphony of power. Intensity was the aspiration of our music, and I wanted our music to sound like the end of **the world, like** everything could explode. The ferocity of our sound was aimed at creating an immersive experience that was different, captivating and stimulating. We wanted our listeners to feel the music in their bones'.

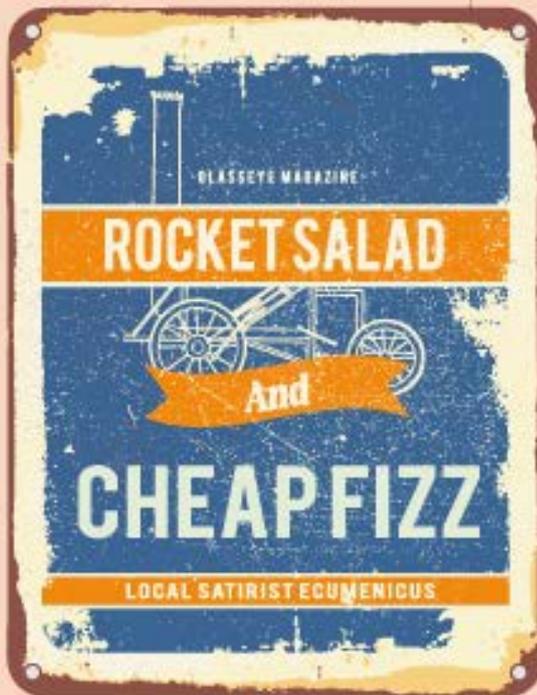
Audience members – Bun, Bri, Cath - recollecting some 34 years later, have been apt to describe Gnarl as 'progressive', 'complex', 'aggressive', as if Gnarl had '**a collective score to settle**', a thing of 'nervous energy', 'animated', 'passionate', 'each gig a thrilling experience'. Messer, meanwhile, says 'before Gnarl entered the stage, you could feel that the crowd knew they were in for something special, and the band didn't disappoint. Pure energy!'

Key buildings were as crucial, all legendary - The Fly, The Citadel, The Alf - in affording necessary meeting-places and staging-posts, where, at last, like-minds could happen upon one another, pool **resources, and plot** strategies. Their role cannot be overstated. Somehow, tapes and albums were made along the way, and, via The Collective **and** other similarly stirring efforts, the scene was given definite shape and urgency. Big gigs, some with **famous** names, were arranged. This was no longer reducible to pub-rock and its expectations, and, as further afield as I have gone in the intervening years, the St. Helens of then remains **rich and remarkable in my memory**, in having some of the best and most individual artists I ever met. Something very special happened, in terminally-unfashionable St. Helens, as some hack at Sounds once defined it. But, right on the cusp, Gnarl broke up, its members dispersing into University and other bands. Since then, almost as rumour and hearsay, I'd learn of recordings circulating, and, as the Internet grew, a few things ended up online. As far as I know,

though, there is no **kind of dedicated** archive, materials being scattered amongst estranged members and others. We never were either nostalgic or good at documenting things, always instead urging forward, forever dissatisfied, extended towards the next **thing, the next** song, the next gig.

Anthony Donovan,  
East Lancashire,  
February 2025





Those old enough to remember "Rocket 150" will recall a major event in 1980, a "great railway cavalcade" at Rainhill at which the replica "Rocket" had to be assisted by a replica "Sans Pareil" to enact the famous Rainhill Trials. The other famous locomotives assembled at Bold Colliery. Now there are plans to celebrate the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 2030 and it's possible that Rainhill won't get a look-in on the shenanigans. We invited local satirist Ecumenicus to imagine what might transpire, en route, as it were. This is what they came up with.

"I didn't expect this many," Ben Hedges murmured to himself in a migraine-inducing contradictory mix of part panic, part relief but mostly confusion.

"I didn't know they were this interested," his musings continued to swirl somewhat mercilessly in among the excited chattering of the crowd.

As Chair of the Rocket Anniversary Steering Party, he had thought his role was to garner support from

CEOs of big firms with bulging wallets eager to cash in on a public relations ego parade. No one said he had to talk to ... the public. They looked keen which meant questions ... lots of questions.

"Don't worry, Ben," consoled the Chair of the Rainhill Celebrations Support Group who had noticed Ben's pained look of shock. "They don't bite ... normally. Anyway, just hit back with some big numbers. Talk millions in investment, employment in the village, legacy for the future stuff like that."

Hedges wasn't too sure about any of those things. Early talks with History Manchester, the small charity leading the bid, had boosted the figures a little optimistically and largely blindly. Wishful thinking aided and abetted by large amounts of homage to the Italian wine industry. In the early heady days, 30 million quid looked and sounded both easy and painless. One year later, the numbers carried an air of desperate gambling and haphazard throws of a dart in a coal cellar at a black cat in an invisibility cloak. And it's probably Schrödinger's cat - it may not be there.

Only he in the room knew of the 'expectation management' that was now the accepted strategy of the Steering Party as months of realpolitik had kicked them in the nether regions. He was in Rainhill, but the perceived wisdom was that only Edge Hill would get anything like a pound sign with a few noughts after it. The rest could only hope to expect a lick of paint, a wooden information board, a couple of antiqued signs, a bench and maybe a heritage plaque from the local Civic Society.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. After several months of waiting, we've

finally been able to get Ben Hedges away from his busy schedule to come to Rainhill to tell us about the exciting opportunities for us here. We all know that the Rocket 150 celebrations didn't go our way with thousands of pounds of merchandise going to waste because British Rail thought we weren't important enough, but Ben is here to reassure you that this time we can expect to be at the centre of the 200th anniversary celebrations." A loud cheer erupted around the room which gave Hedges no comfort of any meaningful description.

"Oh shit," was his actual interpretation of the situation. "Time for some smoke, mirrors, distractions and platitudes" he whispered in his head.

"Thank you, Chair. It's really good to be here in Rainhill at last to see so many enthusiastic faces. I don't have to tell how important these celebrations of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway line are. 2030 is going to be a year to remember locally, nationally and internationally. The visitor economy will experience a massive boost and Liverpool and Manchester will be buzzing with tourists from all over the world?"

Unlike Daniel in the lion's den the Lord was not on Hedges' side today. Instead, it was more akin to facing Russian cannons - lots and lots of cannons - with a very light brigade. From highly motivated applause to tumble weed silence took approximately six seconds. It seemed longer. There wasn't even a cough from Old Joe Higgins - long-time sufferer of everything chesty, phlegmy and respiratory.

"Of course, there will be mention of the ... er ... contribution made by the Rainhill Trials in 1829 the history of the railways, but we must accept that the main focus of attention will be on the opening of the line in 1830. That's where the money will

be. Won't it?"

Even the tumble weed stopped moving. It was a fine exemplar of how to lose an audience in the quickest way possible.

"I'm sure there's a role to play for your ... little village," he rode on into the valley of death at a ridiculously fast gallop. Little village was a bad idea.

"Little Village! Little bloody village!" Someone agreed. "It started here, mate. The Trials changed everything. Rocket changed everything."

"How much?" An anonymous voice called out from the crowd of scowling faces.

"I'm sorry. How much what?" Hedges struggled to grasp a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe a brow furrowed in cold sweat.

"Money! How much money?"

"For what, exactly?" Ben's mouth felt like he'd been dragged face down by Apache warriors through the desert.

"For Rainhill! How much money for us?"

"We've got plans," shouted another voice.

"Big plans," came another.

The cannons started to fire. Cannons to the left of him, cannons to the right of him. Onward rode the silly bugger.

"Well, I'm sure we can allocate five or ten ... perhaps."

"Five or ten what? Quid?"

"Thousand ... maybe a little more," Hedges charged on desperately searching for the mot juste in times of pitchforks and flaming torches. And cannons.

A murmuring of growing animosity spread around the room searching for a victim but there was only one idiot available, so the murmur stood slightly behind the self-harming idiot smirking. One more absurd comment and you're mine sneered the Death-mimicking dark cloud.

"But think of all the publicity," Hedges ventured hopefully.

And there it is, the murmur smiled. Dead meat.

"Are you some sort of fool?"

"What are you going to do with the £30 million we heard about?"

"Who's getting what?"

Questions came so hard and fast that they merged into a cacophony of sound so loud it hurt.

The Chair of the Celebrations Support Group made no attempt at rescuing Hedges. Indeed, he had decided that he'd only intervene if there was a chance of murder. However, grievous bodily harm he thought was more than justified in the circumstances.

"Are you being paid off?" Hedges heard above the clamour.

"Town Hall got to you, did they?"

"Looking for an easy knighthood more likely."

"Listen, I hear what you're saying and I'm listening. There's obviously some synergy of ideas here and we need to be more agile. I sense the need for an intrapreneurial biz-jam so we can touch base in a collective thought shower. Now why don't you put all your ideas in the creativity fridge and snack on them later. Adopt a 30,000 ft view. Double click on some of your most favoured notions. Have a mind meld together. You'll reach the conclusion I'm sure that Rainhill may have to accept that it doesn't have the bandwidth to deal with the emerging scenario so maybe you'll have to hive all our thoughts and let them gel in the fullness of time."

Hedges' relief at the sudden ejaculation of biz speak was short-lived. His cheap fizz had saved him in the past since no one usually understood it, but it was vaguely reassuring putting important decisions on as very distant back burner which resided in an alternate universe somewhere.

This time it was plain for all to see that the little village of Rainhill was

not full of village idiots. Hedges imagined – not inaccurately – that he could hear the sharpening of a scythe.

The Support Group Chair sensed a palpable change in barometric pressure. It now indicated a storm approaching. Time to move. Murder was now a serious option, and this was a newspaper headline he could do without.

"Time to go," he insisted.

Hedges agreed as he was bundled like a serial killer appearing at the Old Bailey out of the fire exit – the noise of a mob in full rage behind him.

"Well, it didn't take long to upset them, did it?" Sarcasm drizzled onto the words like amber over an unsuspecting fly.

"I thought they might have come to terms with the facts," Hedges spluttered.

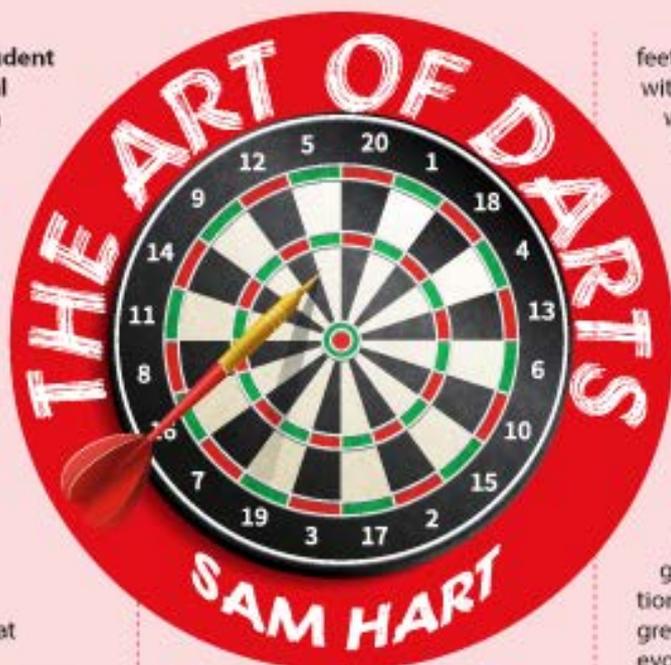
"Facts? The facts are these. Rocket is an iconic locomotive recognisable around the world. Rocket and the Rainhill Trials are symbolic of one of the most momentous events in the history of the Industrial Revolution. Not Edge Hill. Not Earlestown. Not Newton-le-Willows. Not Chat Moss. It all started here!" The Chair pointed directly at the ground. "Now you go back and tell your ridiculous bunch of liquorice all sorts Steering Party that Rainhill is going to fight. They will not ignore us! The world will not ignore us! The future will not ignore us! Our time has come!"

So he left.



Sam Hart is a final year student at the University of Central Lancashire. Having been a lifelong sport fan, he opted to enrol on a Football Studies BSc, with the aim of becoming a football coach in the future. He spends his free time watching and playing an array of sports – specifically darts! – upcycling and reworking trainers, alongside writing and publishing 'Guided Wander' travel guides for the Over 50s)

I've always loved the fact that



feet, take aim, and unleash a dart with confidence can feel like witnessing a performance. It requires discipline, flair, and a certain knack for showmanship that captivates spectators.

I feel that one reason the North-West produces so many talented players is due to our deep-rooted pub culture. After a hard day's work, local people have traditionally gathered at the pub to unwind. Dart boards are often a focal point in these venues, and over time, friendly games turned into small competitions. Eventually, those competitions grew in prestige. This organic evolution from a pastime to a professional pursuit helped cultivate a serious training ground for players who dedicated themselves to perfecting their throws.

One thing I would argue sets darts apart from other sports is its strong sense of community. Even in high stakes matches, there's an element of camaraderie. The crowd may boo or cheer, but there's also respect for the skill and nerve it takes to stand up on stage and deliver. For many of us in the North-West, darts is a shared experience that breaks down barriers. It doesn't matter if you're a beginner awkwardly taking your first shot or a seasoned pro like Luke Littler aiming for a 180. Everyone is welcome to stand at the oche, feel the weight of the dart in their hand, and give it their best shot.



anyone can play darts. You don't need to be the tallest, the fittest, or have access to expensive equipment. All you need is a board, a set of darts, and a touch of determination.

Growing up, I watched players from the same kind of background as me rise through the professional ranks, turning a casual pub game into a professional career. That was all the inspiration I needed to pick up a set of darts myself.

Luke Littler has quickly become a name to watch in the world of darts, but his rapid rise speaks to something far bigger than just individual success. In the North-West of England, spanning towns like Warrington, St Helens, Wigan, and beyond, darts isn't just a casual pub game. It's an activity that I've seen unite friends, families, and entire communities, reflecting both the region's work ethic and its affinity for spirited social gatherings.

At its core, darts is about precision and control. Each throw demands steady hands, focused eyes, and remaining calm under pressure. I'm

sure all dart players out there will agree that aiming for that elusive triple 20 is a test of nerves and technique, requiring a level of practice that rivals any other sport. Though, I believe there's more to darts than mechanics alone. Watching an accomplished player set their





The Entire History of St Helens with Claire Rigby

Images : The Entire History of St. Helens with Claire Rigby



While it may not have the global hype of football, darts has its own brand of drama. Those final moments when a player needs just one more double to clinch victory can be as powerful as any penalty shootout. The tension in the air is intense, and the release when the winning dart lands is electric. Combine that excitement with the down-to-earth spirit of the North-West, and you have a game that's both competitive and unpretentious.

Darts also offers moments of artistry that may not be obvious at first glance. Repeated practice hones a thrower's stance and release, turning them into muscle memory moves that look almost effortless. The best players make split-second calculations about angles and distances, much like a craftsman sizing up raw materials. I have always thought that there is a satisfying harmony when the darts land exactly where they're intended, which is proof of countless hours spent refining a seemingly simple motion.

In the end, I strongly believe that darts deserves recognition as more than just a pastime. It's a game of skill and nerve, a communal tradition, and a source of pride for



the North-West. Luke Littler's rise is a testament to what's possible when natural talent meets a region that truly values the sport. Beyond the pub and the lively banter, there's a shared understanding that darts, like

any activity that demands dedication, has a certain artistry worth celebrating.

## Introducing - Claire Rigby

Some people call me a historian, I call myself a storyteller. I started this journey with a small community café on Cotham Street that grew into a heritage centre and a place for people to come together with a love for history. I recently left the café to pursue just history. I spend a lot of my time find characters from old St Helens and bringing them back to life, from the old lamplighters to the homeless men to the prostitutes.

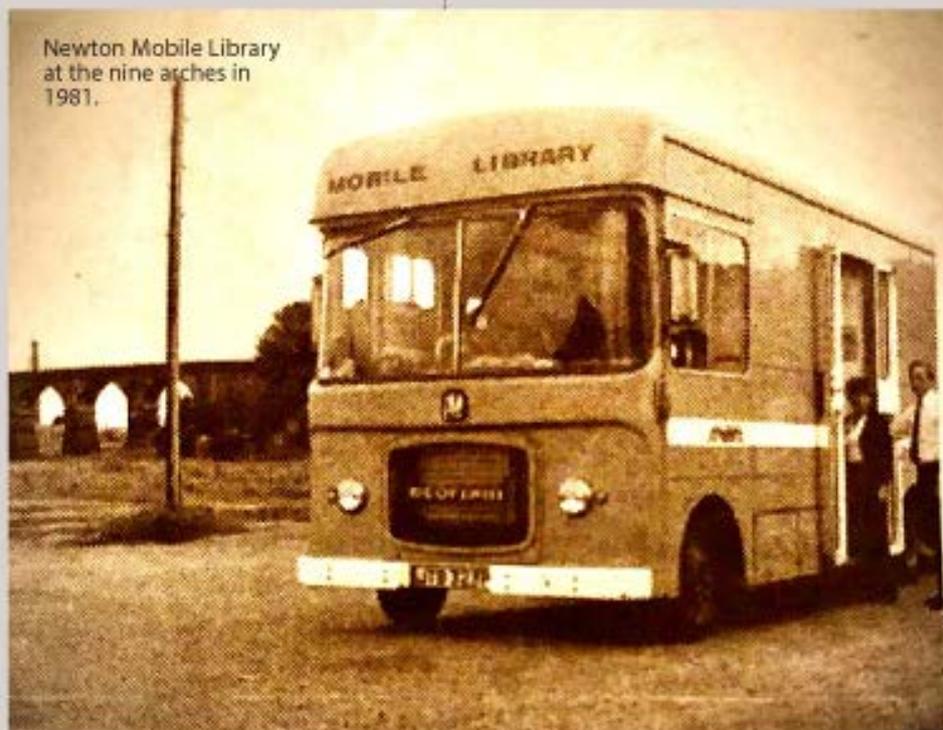
My special interest is those that history has forgotten, the poor, the underclass, people in the local workhouse and jailcells and bring them back to life. I enjoy to bringing people together through my Facebook history page – the Entire History of St Helens with Claire Rigby and through talks at various venues across all corners of the town. People have become socially isolated since the dawn of the internet, and my goal to encourage as many people as possible to leave their sofa and come to one of my talks on various aspects of history, that can be anything from the old asylums, to the incoming Irish to Greenbank or the vicious murders that happened on the back streets

of Victorian St.Helens. I have built a small community of people that have a love for their town and want to learn about its beginnings.

One of the greatest memories I have from childhood is visiting my Nana on Clinkham Wood and it stirs memories of the close-knit communities that used to exist and still does in some parts like Clinkham Wood. The memory that brings me joy is the coming of the old mobile libraries that would pull up on the

grass verge. A mood of thrill would hit the community as old and young alike would climb aboard to rummage through the books to see which they would like to take that week. The mobile library is a rarity these days, with most being phased out in councils over the late 1980's and 1990's and are now almost extinct due to the coming of the eBook. But there is still something special about flipping the pages of a book, the smell, the little pencil notes, the dog

ears. The time where children would sit idly waiting for the library, or the ice cream man, playing ball in the streets. It may be a faraway reminiscence now to some, but my goal is to one day own one of these old buses and bring them back to the streets. To pack it full like a museum with knickknacks, trinkets and old books, and once again hear the excitement of children shouting, 'it's here' and the old and the new generations standing on the streets once again, gossiping and catching up.



Newton Mobile Library at the nine arches in 1981.

## NOTICED

This is the person we pictured on the second page – actor Warren Donnelly, who says,

*Over the past ten years or so, I've worked a lot in St Helens, at the Theatre Royal, mostly in pantomime, short and long runs, and it's somewhere that I'm very comfortable in. I've*

*regular audience and it's a great place to work, very much a family atmosphere. Sometimes I get the bus to St Helens (10 or 10a!). It takes me through Old Swan, where I spent my childhood, and that brings back many happy memories. So my version of St Helens is a very happy version, and I hope to be back working there soon. My best times at the Theatre? - playing to full houses, who are loving the show. The worst? - the end of the show, it's all over, though hopefully I'll be back soon, so it's not over!*

And the big bird (also on page 2) can be found at the East end of Church Street (just look up a bit)

## THE GLASS EYE WORKING GROUP

MARCH 2025

Steve Arkwright  
Nathan Atherton  
Kieran de More  
Sue Gerrard  
Barry Gore  
Roger Hill  
Lee Knapper  
Barrie Pennington

Deadline for Issue 4 – May 1st  
Magazine available from all St Helens Libraries, The Book Stop, Kaleidoscope Records, World of Glass and various community outlets



Image: Warren Donnelly

*discovered some nice pubs, tasty places to eat, and friendly locals. The Theatre Royal has*

I love it! It's full of great features. Definitely a step up from issue one as well! Well done all! Keep it up!

David Lloyd



Issue 2 soft cover for the win. Can't say I'll be putting it on my reading list, but Baker & Harris recap was a good read.

J.M. Liverpool

The St Helens Show piece - As good a piece of journalism as I've read in decades. Super magazine - Keep on trucking

J.C. St. Helens

**Going,  
going...**

**Coming  
in Issue 4**

**Mid-May  
2025**

(deadline - May 1st)

**Footsteps In  
Focus**

**Remembering  
The Gamble**

**Town Centre  
rebuild**

**This town  
needs.....  
Guitars**

**More Public  
Art**

NEW CROSS STREET SOUTH

24

24

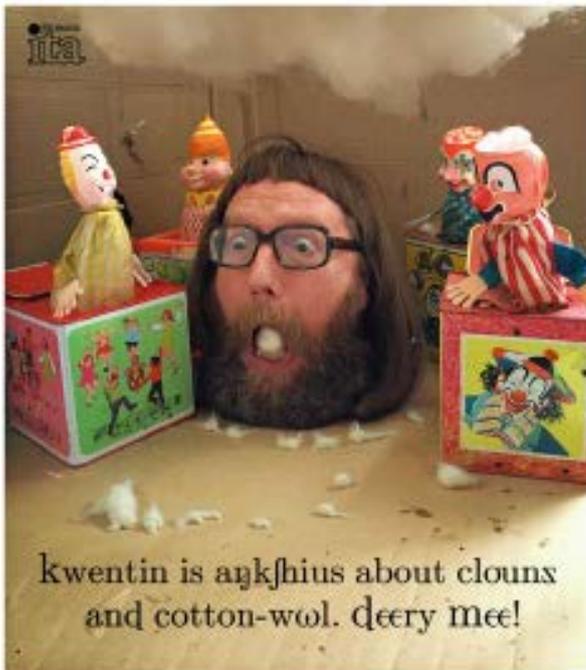
BURCHALL'S



every þurxdæ kwentin strætens himself out with an ieron becaus he is to impæhient to goe on a diet due to hix aufol adicshon to luycshon meet.



kwentin has a hed æc becaus his reflecshon in the mirror is aull roy



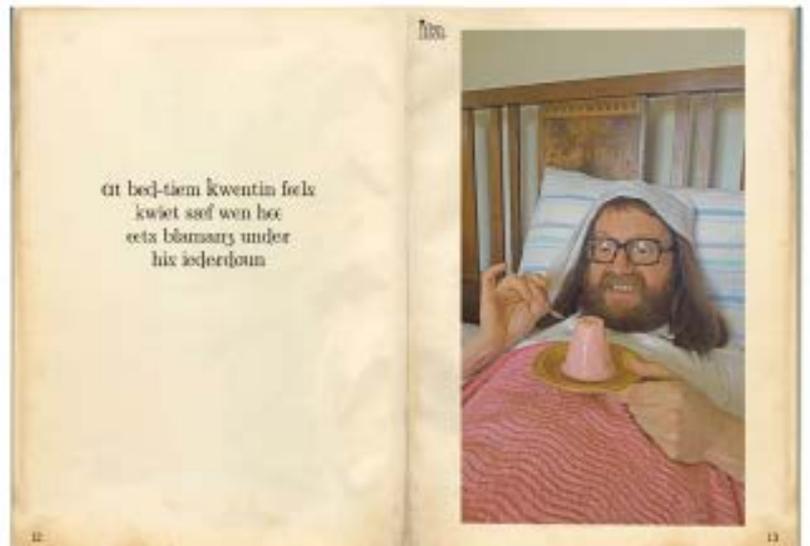
kwentin is æyksnius about clouns and cotton-wol. deery mee!



kwentin has acsidentaly swollced a cœt-hayer. hee mæ hav to goe to the hospital and hav an operæshon to get it removd. silly kwentin!



kwentin has an aufol coelð and is short ov breth, so hee is rubbig viks on hix chest and spectacls for god meyer.



æt beç-tiem kwentin foelð kwiet saef wen hee setz blamsary under hix isclerþoun

kwentin